

Message Text

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TAGS: EGEN, PFDR, UK, FR, NH

SUBJECT: ANGLO-FRENCH TALKS ABOUT NEW HEBRIDES

REF: (A) STATE 263482, (B) USUN 5362

1. WE DISCUSSED RESULTS OF ANGLO-FRENCH TALKS ON NEW HEBRIDES WITH R. A. EILBECK, PACIFIC DEPENDENT TERRITORIES DEPARTMENT, FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE. ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED FOR EARLY 1973 AND POSTPONED FOUR TIMES BY ELECTIONS, THESE WERE THE FIRST MINISTERIAL LEVEL TALKS ON THE CONDOMINIUM SINCE 1966. ACCORDING TO EILBECK, THE FCO AT THE URGING OF ITS RESIDENT COMMISSIONER IN THE NEW HEBRIDES, DEBOULAY, HAS RECOGNIZED FOR SOME TIME THE NEED TO PROVIDE THE NEW HEBRIDEANS WITH MORE SAY IN RUNNING THEIR AFFAIRS. THE FRENCH, HOWEVER, HAVE BEEN RELUCTANT TO DISCUSS CHANGES IN THE CONDOMINIUM AND ONLY AGREED RELUCTANTLY TO THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL MEETING. THE UK DELEGATION WAS THUS SURPRISED THAT ONCE THE TALKS STARTED THE FRENCH DELEGATION READILY AGREED TO THE PROPOSED REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY AND DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES. THE FRENCH STRESSED, HOWEVER, THIS WAS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AS FAR AS THEY WERE PREPARED TO GO IN GRANTING THE

NEW HEBRIDEANS CONTROL OVER THEIR AFFAIRS. EILBECK SAID THAT MEETING HAD NOT GONE BEYOND OUTLINING THE BROAD PRINCIPLES LISTED IN THE COMMUNIQUE. SPECIFICS WILL BE WORKED OUT AT THE TECHNICAL LEVEL OVER THE NEXT YEAR.

2. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON THE IMPACT OF PARAGRAPH F CALLING FOR NEW LAND TENURE SYSTEM, EILBECK SAID THE CURRENT PRINCIPLES CONTROLLING SUBDIVISION WILL REMAIN. AN ATTEMPT WILL BE MADE TO RATIONALIZE LAND TENURE IN ORDER TO RECOGNIZE NEW HEBRIDEANS' TRADITIONAL VIEWS ON OWNERSHIP. IN PARTICULAR THE "GIN BOTTLE SALES" WHEREBY SUBSTANTIAL TRACTS OF LAND WERE "PURCHASED" FOR SO MANY BOTTLES OF SPIRITS WILL BE CAREFULLY REVIEWED. NEITHER THE FRENCH NOR THE BRITISH RAISED THE PROBLEMS INVOLVING US LAND DEVELOPERS.

SPIERS

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